

# Parts of Speech

## Nouns:

A noun is a word that names a person, place, thing, or idea.

A proper noun refers to a specific person place or thing. These nouns are always capitalized.

Examples:

Person: Kevin is an artist.

Place: We went to Boston last summer.

Thing: Friday is the best day of the week.

Common nouns are all nouns that do not refer to a specific person, place, or thing.

Common:

Suzy looked at the building.

The book is on the desk.

The city is beautiful.

The teacher graded the tests.

Proper:

Suzy looked at City Hall.

War and Peace is on the desk.

Philadelphia is beautiful.

Ms. Johnson graded the tests.

## Pronouns:

A pronoun is used in place of a noun. Before using the pronoun, the noun being replaced (also known as the antecedent) should be referred to within the same sentence or in a previous sentence in the paragraph.

Examples: *Stephanie* went shopping, and she bought two picture frames.

*George* loves to read. He spends most of his time in the library.

There are many categories of pronouns. Three of the most commonly referred to are personal pronouns, relative pronouns, and indefinite pronouns.

Personal Pronouns refer to specific persons or things. Personal pronouns include the following pronouns: *I, me, you, she, her, he, him, it, we, us, they, them*.

Relative Pronouns introduce subordinate/dependent clauses functioning as adjectives. A relative pronoun also refers back to the noun or pronoun that the clause modifies. Relative pronouns include the following pronouns: *who, whom, whose, which, that*.

Example: The book that Amanda bought is on the desk.

In this sentence, “that” is referring back to the noun “book.”

Writers commonly confuse the relative pronouns *who* and *whom*.

*Who* is used when it is the subject of a sentence or a predicate noun.

Example: Who is there?

*Whom* is used when it is the direct object, indirect object, or object of a preposition.

Example: You will give the gift to whom?

Indefinite Pronouns refer to nonspecific persons or things. When dealing with indefinite pronouns, most are singular, some are plural, and some may be both singular and plural.

Singular indefinite pronouns include: *anybody, anyone, anything, each, either, everybody, everyone, everything, neither, nobody, no one, somebody, someone, something.*

Plural indefinite pronouns include: *both, few, many, others, several.*

Both Singular and Plural indefinite pronouns include: *all, any, more, most, none, some.* These pronouns function as singular or plural depending on the noun to which they refer.

Singular Example: All of the cake was gone.

In this sentence, “all” is referring to “cake,” which is singular.

Plural Example: All of the students left the classroom.

In this sentence, “all” is referring to “students,” which is plural.

Possessive Pronouns express ownership. Possessive Pronouns include: *my, mine, your, yours, her, hers, his, its, our, ours, their, theirs.*

Interrogative Pronouns introduce questions. Interrogative pronouns include: *who, whom, whose, which, that.*

Demonstrative Pronouns identify or point to nouns. They often function as adjectives, but may also function as the equivalent of a noun.

Demonstrative pronouns include: *this, that, these, those.*

A pronoun should clearly refer to its antecedent. A pronoun’s reference can be unclear if it is ambiguous, implied, vague, or indefinite.

Ambiguous reference occurs when a pronoun can refer to two or more possible antecedents.

Ambiguous Example: She put the *pie plate* in the *oven* and it broke.  
In this sentence, “it” can refer to both the pie plate and the oven.

Correction: She put the *pie plate* in the oven, and *the plate* broke.

Implied reference occurs when a pronoun refers to a word that is implied but not stated within the sentence.

Implied Example: The union reached a decision on Carol’s case, but it took some time.

In this sentence, the reader cannot be certain to what “it” is referring. “It” can refer to both the union and the implied decision-making.

Correction: The union reached a decision on Carol’s case, but the process took some time.

Vague reference occurs when a pronoun, typically the pronouns *this*, *that*, *which*, and *it*, does not clearly refer to a specific noun within the sentence.

Vague Example: This is my favorite thing to do!

In this sentence, the pronoun “this” does not clearly refer to a noun within the sentence.

Correction: Gardening is my favorite thing to do!

Indefinite reference occurs when the pronouns *it*, *they*, or *you* are used to refer indefinitely to persons or objects not specifically mentioned within the sentence.

Example: After turning off the store lights, they locked the doors for the evening.

In this sentence, it is unclear to whom “they” is referring.

Correction: After turning off the store lights, the employees locked the doors for the evening.

Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement:

In addition to having clear references, a pronoun should also agree with its antecedent in number. In order for this to occur, the pronoun and its antecedent must both be singular or plural.

Example: The student finished her essay. (singular)  
The students finished their essays. (plural)

### Agreement with Indefinite Pronouns

Indefinite pronouns refer to nonspecific persons or things. The following indefinite pronouns are singular, though commonly mistaken as plural: *anybody, anyone, anything, each, either, everybody, everyone, everything, neither, nobody, no one, somebody, someone, something*. Also, remember to watch out for indefinite pronouns that may function as both singular and plural. Make sure the noun, pronoun, and verb agree in number!

Common Error: Everyone in the class went to their lockers.

When this error occurs, the writer can replace the plural pronoun with he or she (or his or her). The writer may also make the antecedent plural or rewrite the sentence to make the pronoun and antecedent agree.

Correction: Everyone in the class went to his or her locker.

### Verbs:

A verb expresses an action or state of being. This word tells what the subject is doing, has done, or will be doing.

Verbs create an active or passive voice within the sentence.

Active Voice conveys that the subject of the sentence is *performing* the action. Active voice is usually preferred for college level writers

Example: Mary played the game.

Passive Voice conveys that the subject of the sentence is *receiving* the action. Passive voice is often indicated by a linking/auxiliary verb and the present tense of a “regular” verb.

Example: The game was played by Mary.

Verbs are transitive or intransitive.

A transitive verb displays an action and is followed by an object receiving the action.

Example: Joe ate the cake.

In this sentence, “the cake” is the object of “ate.”

An intransitive verb does not take an object.

Example: The crowd moves across the field.

Auxiliary Verbs are also known as helping verbs. The verbs *have, do, and be* function as helping verbs. These verbs combine with a main verb to create a complete verb. It is possible to have words in between the helping verb and the main verb

Example: Our parents have gone to the store.

Shannon is not going to the store.

**Tenses:** The verb tense tells the reader when the action is taking place.

Verbs are regular or irregular. A regular verb follows a standard pattern when shifting tenses. With a regular verb, the past tense and the past participle are formed by adding a -d or an -ed to the end of the verb. An irregular verb does not follow this pattern; however, there are several common irregular forms. A dictionary is the best resource for distinguishing a regular verb from an irregular verb.

A verb in present tense tells of an action taking place at the present time, or happening consistently.

Regular Example: I walk.                      He walks.

Irregular Example: The glass breaks.

A verb in past tense tells of an action that was completed some time in the past.

Regular Example: I walked.

Irregular Example: The glass broke.

A verb in future tense tells of an action that will occur at some point in the future.

Regular Example: I will walk.

Irregular Example: The glass will break.

A verb in present perfect tense tells of an action that began at some point in the past, but is still happening in the present time.

Example: Alyssa has lived in London for three years.

A verb in past perfect tense is used when discussing two events to distinguish which event occurred first.

Example: I had never seen such a beautiful lake until our trip to the mountains last fall.

A verb in future perfect tense is used to express action that will have been completed at some time in the future.

Example: By the time Sara arrives, we will have spent several hours shopping.

**Prepositions:**

A preposition is a word placed before a noun or pronoun to form a phrase modifying another word in the sentence. These phrases function as adjectives or adverbs.

Example: While we traveled to the amusement park, Anna slept.

The most common prepositions in the English Language are:

About	Beside	In	Past	Unlike
Above	Besides	Inside	Plus	Until
Across	Between	Into	Regarding	Unto
After	Beyond	Like	Respecting	Up
Against	But	Near	Round	Upon
Along	By	Next	Since	With
Among	Concerning	Of	Than	Within
Around	Considering	Off	Through	Without
As	Despite	On	Throughout	
At	Down	Onto	Till	
Before	During	Opposite	To	
Behind	Except	Out	Toward	
Below	For	Outside	Under	
Beneath	From	Over	Underneath	

**Adjectives:**

An adjective is a word used to modify or describe a noun. Typically, these words are placed before the noun they modify and provide the reader with additional information about the noun.

Example: The blue car  
Four dogs  
 The old, white sweater

**Adverbs:**

An adverb is a word used to modify or describe a verb, adjective, or another adverb. Typically, adverbs answer the questions how, when, where, to what degree, or under what conditions. Negating words, such as “not” and “never” are also considered adverbs.

Example: Paint the right wall last. (When was the wall painted?)  
Carefully mix the ingredients. (How were the ingredients mixed?)  
 He is extremely talented. (To what degree is he talented?)

**Conjunctive Adverbs:**

Unlike coordinating and subordinating conjunctions, conjunctive adverbs do not bind a sentence into a grammatical unit. Rather, they are adverbs that serve to describe the relation between the ideas in two sentences or two independent clauses. Due to this

distinction, a conjunctive adverb can appear in different places in the same sentence (whereas coordinating and subordinating conjunctions cannot be moved around). Note that conjunctive adverbs are set off by commas!

Common Conjunctive Adverbs

accordingly	also	anyhow	besides	consequently	furthermore
hence	however	indeed	instead	likewise	meanwhile
moreover	nevertheless	otherwise	similarly	still	then
therefore	thus				

Conjunctive adverbs may be used at the beginning of a sentence to show a relationship to the idea of the preceding sentence:

During registration, many of the popular classes fill up quickly. *Therefore*, it is important for students to register as early as possible.

In the middle of a sentence:

During registration, many of the popular classes fill up quickly. It is, *therefore*, important for students to register as early as possible.

At the end of a sentence:

During registration, many of the popular classes fill up quickly. It is important for students to register as early as possible, *therefore*.

In a similar way, conjunctive adverbs can be used after a semicolon to connect two independent clauses:

During registration, many of the popular classes fill up quickly; *therefore*, it is important for students to register as early as possible.